1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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of the huts in the Morane chena settlement at Henebedda. It was shown us with pride by Handuna who said he was keeping it for his twelve year old son. He told us that in the old days the hollow branches, the homes of colonies of these bees, were frequently kept in the rock-shelters.

The ladder with the help of which *bambara* honey is collected consists of a greatly elongated loop of cane, apparently derived from a species of *Calamus*, across which rungs of creeper are stretched. In Plate LV (p. 290) there can be seen the bottom of the ladder some fifty feet long, used for training the young, hung from the top of the cliff across the face of the rock mass at Sitala Wanniya. In spite of the fact that honey is usually gathered at night the Veddas do not travel or hunt at night and know only two stars by name. One of these is a star or more probably a planet which often appears close to the moon and is called *pantaru* which, we were told, is the name by which the Sinhalese know it. The other named star appears soon after sunset, always in the same place and before the other stars, and is almost certainly Venus; this is called *irabada tarua*, i.e. "side of sun star." Although the Veddas hunt in the dusk of the dawn the idea that anyone would roam about at night seemed absolutely ludicrous to them (Sitala Wanniya), they roared with laughter at it, "why should one go into the jungle? it would be too dark to see to shoot, besides bears are about, absurd idea," they laughed again, in fact it was quite ten minutes before Kaira had forgotten the joke.

MASTICATORIES.

All Veddas chew eagerly, but as they can rarely obtain a supply of areca nuts they commonly use instead of these the bark of the *demata* tree (*Gmelina asiatica*) and the *dawata* tree (*Carallia integerrima*). Concerning the other plants that they use as masticatories Nevill says, "They occasionally chew the leaves of several aromatic herbs, particularly *Anisochilus suffruticosus*, a sort of sage that grows on rocks. The areca does not grow wild in the Eastern Province, but Veddas are very fond of the seeds of the lakada bush, *Gardenia carinata*, a

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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261 276 beautiful species of Gardenia with fragant flowers and crimped laurel-like leaves. These seeds or nuts are astringent and to me resemble exactly in taste those of the areca palm. They are only an occasional luxury however. The bark which he chews is almost a necessity to a Vedda, the leaves or seeds a mere luxury[1]."

[105] 276 It is not always that the Veddas can obtain lime, which they make by burning the shells of a land snail *wantaiko* (*Cyclophorus involvulus*). The shells are laid on red hot pieces of charcoal, more glowing embers are heaped around and upon them, and the whole is fanned with a tuft of green leaves for a few minutes, when the embers surrounding the shells are raked away and the shells allowed to cool before being crushed and dropped into the vessel in which the lime is carried. This is [415] often a tin match box or it may be a brass covered cartridge case. Specially made lime spatulae do not exist, but one Vedda of Henebedda had a long broad nail with which he removed the lime from his tin match box.

276 415 The betel pouch is usually a roughly sewn bag of trade cloth, but the Henebedda Veddas also make pouches of monkey skin, one of which is shown in Plate LXVII. We omitted to inquire how the hair was removed, but probably it was singed off, the whole skin being subsequently scraped.

[1] *Op. cit.* Vol. I. p. 191.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

to catch the hum of bees, which so instantaneously struck his ear. Their forest life naturally quickens their powers both of seeing and hearing, and renders them, in these respects, far superior to those whose more civilized lives do not compel them to rely on those faculties for their daily food.

They take honey in the manner common to the Singhalese. The bee-hunter enlarges with his small axe the hole in the tree at which the bee enters, and putting his mouth to the aperture, blows into it. This has generally the effect of making the bees fly out; or, at least, of making them vacate the comb, and retire into the innermost recesses of the hollow tree, when the honey can be taken with the hand. If this do not succeed, however, a second puff, after the bee-hunter has chewed some aromatic substance, has the desired effect.

Taking the honey of the bambera (*apis Indica*), a large and very venomous bee, is a much more serious affair. This bee hives on very lofty trees, or in clefts of precipitous rocks. If on a tree, the hunter ties tendrils to it, and armed with a bundle of blazing faggots, climbs to the vicinity of the comb and smokes the bees out, being often severely stung during the operation. If in a cleft of rock, he will, if he cannot otherwise approach it, lower himself with ropes made of creepers, and take the honey by the same process.

To the Veddahs, honey is not only favourite food, but valuable as an object of barter, for the Kandyans prize it greatly for medicinal purposes. They use it, too, as Knox tells us, for preserving flesh. "They cut a hollow tree and put honey in it, and then fill it with flesh, and stop it with clay, which lyes for a reserve to eat in time of want."* And when they are short of food, they mix honey with decayed wood, and so eat it. It satisfies their craving more readily than plain honey. Davy properly describes the practice, as "not so much for nourishment as to distend the empty stomach and to allay the distressing feelings of emptiness and the pains of hunger." It is curious that Tennent should have entirely omitted all allusion to this remarkable custom. "Romba" is the term used by the Veddahs, for this decayed wood, and the practice I have described may have given rise to the epithet, which Knox applies to the "wild sort" called "Ramba Veddahs," who, he says, "never shew themselves"—but no "sort" is so called now, nor is the name remembered.†

* Knox, part iii, chap. i, p. 63.

† Knox, part iii, chap. i, p. 63. The wood so used is chiefly that of the eriminia creeper (*zizyphus œnophlia*, Mill.), the ettamba—wild mango (*mangifera Indica*, Quin.), the weera (*hemicyclia sepiaria*, W. and A.), the rêna, the nooga, a species of fig; any wood, indeed, not poisonous, is used. They reject the wood of the kaduru (*cerbera odallum*, Gœstn.), the goda

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

They are very rude in their cookery, often burning the flesh in the fire, which they produce by rubbing together two pieces of the wood of the vellan tree (*Pterospermum suberifolium*, Sam.). A hole is scooped in one piece with an arrow-blade, and the other, which is pointed, is inserted into it, and twirled rapidly round between the hands till it ignites. [252] 372

They are fond of betel, when they can get it; but in lieu of the compound which goes by this name, they have the following substitutes. Instead of the betel leaf, they eat the astringent bark of the demette tree (*Gmelina Asiatica*, *L.*), or the leaves of an aromatic plant called the madurutala (*Ocimum sanctum*—or *O. canum*, *L.*) For areka nut, they chew the bark of the moratree (*Nephelium longanum*, Camb.), the oupaloo or wellan connitta tree; and calcined snail shells, or the bark of the areloo tree (*Terminalia chebula*, Retz.), supplies the place of lime or chunam, which forms so important an ingredient in a prepared quid of betel. They do not smoke, and are very temperate, drinking water only. 276 824 [237] [271]

I need not say that they are very simple and primitive in their habits. The "wilder sort" have had too little communication with the Singhalese to have acquired the vices of civilization. The few necessaries of life which the forest does not supply, such as steel and iron for their arrow-heads and axes, and the very scanty clothing which they wear, they obtain by barter, their wax and honey, elk flesh, and ivory, being eagerly sought after by the neighbouring Singhalese, or "the ubiquitous Moors." 177 [439]

They are very harmless, too; though, according to Knox, were much dreaded once. Even yet there are traditions that they kidnapped children, ran off with young girls, way-laid travellers, and attacked the tavalams or bullock-caravans. But now, at any rate, they are as peaceful as it is possible to be. They are proverbially truthful and honest. They are fond of their children, who early become useful to them; the boys soon are familiar with the use of the bow, while the girls, armed with a pointed stick, add to the family larder at a very tender age, by killing the iguano, and digging for wild yams. 648 181 [868]

Their constancy to their wives is a very remarkable trait in their character in a country where conjugal fidelity is certainly not classed as the highest of domestic virtues. Infidelity, whether in the husband or the wife, appears to be unknown, and I was 837

kadura (*strychnos, nux vomica*), the diwi kaduru (*taberna montana dichotoma*, Roxb.), the kolong (*nauclea cordifolia*, Roxb.), the milla (*vitex altissima*, Linn.), the mora (*nephelium longanum*, Camb.), the kaluwera (ebony, *ebenum*, Retz), which they say would stupify them; but though the three first mentioned trees would be injurious, it is probably that the rest would be harmless. [824] [261]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

123 We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow [411 carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They 412] were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their homes.

621 In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of [342] these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena** close [162] by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kosgaha* [164] *Ulpotta* before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and [146] children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and framboesia. There was but one old man among them. The children were emaciated and languid.

144 Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially 177 the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the coy smiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to 142 Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and upstanding frizzly hair.

411 They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children, 524 but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and *thimbiri* to give it the appearance of use.

342 The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry 415 grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

262 Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurrukhan*† 224 and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of 231 the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food 264 is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in 261 times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few 415 varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with melted wax (*itee reithee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months 221 of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *palu*, *veera*, *kong*, or 222 *mora*‡ fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and children, dogs, and chattels and go.

515 "How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything; we can eat even a man then!"

904 In answer to the question how they measured distances and what constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we [276] place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew a quid; that is our mile".

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[137] *A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Minusops hexandra*, *Hemicyclia sepiaria*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Nephelium longana*, *respectively*.

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

423 But what irony is all this talk of chiefs and clans and possessions, where
656 only a mere handful of spiritless people is concerned. The Veddas alone recognise their boundaries, Government does not. Quite rightly they are not permitted to fell their forests without sanction, or to give their lands away; for what would be easier than to cozen such simple folk. These Veddas may cultivate *chenas* with permission from Government but without tax; a privilege they are impotent to avail themselves of, and are still hunters enough to disregard, whether under encouragement or compulsion. "What lands have the Veddas now?" lamented Kaurala. "Our rightful lands! Why should we be deprived of them? The earth of our land is honey to us". And in those words he spoke the doom of his race.

Let us leave the last of the Veddas alone, and not try to fashion them to our ways; for that would kill them the sooner. Let them die out, scattered in their lonely jungles, the hunters they have always been. A few decades hence and the Vedda will be but a name.

651 Not every Vedda is exempt from taxation. I believe those in the Eastern Province are taxed, while those of Uva are not. Why this distinction, it is hard to understand; except for the plea that nowadays it is difficult to say who is a Vedda and who not. But, in cases of doubt, the conditions of life that characterise a particular community should be the criterion that influences the decision, favourably or otherwise. It does seem hard that these poor people, who never handle a single cent from one year's end to another, and have barely a rag with which to cover their nakedness, should have to pay a tax of two rupees with the richest in the land! In default of payment, a penalty of some ten days' work on the roads is imposed; an equitable provision on the face of it; but what of the family with the bread-winner thus engaged? After all, these people only live from day to day; and even sickness very often means starvation.

241 As for *chena* cultivation,* there can be little doubt that it is the one form
311 of agriculture, best suited to the primitive folk of the arid forests; but a
656 serious attempt should be made to better the wasteful methods now in vogue. I remember once travelling through a Province where a progressive, but misguided policy—as applied to these parts—prevailed: *chena* licences had been with-held that year with a view to enforcing paddy cultivation; (in such forests! and among such folk!). The result was disastrous. It was heart-rending to see the starved, emaciated villagers Sinhalese and Veddas alike, digging out wild, unsavoury yams from
● 261 the baked ground. They would have given their lives for a little *kurrukkan* or maize, which was nowhere to be had.

Chenas represent a very primitive and wasteful form of agriculture. In June of each year an area of jungle is leased by several families. The trees are felled, and burnt two weeks later. The land is then cleared, except for a residue of charred trunks. Temporary huts are suitably disposed, and the whole surrounded by a fence-work of burnt logs, so strong that it must be proof against elephants, so tall that it must top the sambur's leap, so close that it must keep out the hare. By August this work is completed.

In September the crops are sown:—Maize or *iriṇḍu* which takes 4 months, and manioc which takes a year to mature; vegetables such as pumpkins, melons and beans (*puhul, wattaka, thimbiri, kakiri, leema*); yams such as *kuhul-alla, wal-alla, watapol, kodol*. In October and November, *kurrukkan*, chillies, green-gram, and perhaps a little paddy is planted.

During February, March, and April the *kurrukkan* and maize crops are harvested—or rather what is left of them when the elephants and drought have had their say

224 descend; while two or three others, with perhaps a dog, beat the jungle above and start the animal, which is shot almost at the point of the guns.

267 There is no flesh the Vedda loves more than that of the wanderoo
274 (grey langur). He will sometimes be seen to halt by a tree, and strike its trunk three resounding blows with his axe-head. This is to discover the whereabouts of the wanderoo. On hearing the sound, these animals, imagining it to be that of a falling tree or rock, give vent to the "a-he-hik" so characteristic of them when startled.

252 One afternoon Suthu Banda brought in a great langur slung on his
[482] shoulder, with its tail rove through its slit cheek. Within twenty-five minutes not a morsel of the animal remained. Disjointing the tail at the root, he dissected up a strip of dorsal skin in continuation of it as far as the neck; twisting this over a branch, he suspended and rapidly skinned the quarry. The meat was cut up in pieces and placed on large logs over a fire, the flames licking them all round. Bony segments, such as the spine, ribs and limbs, were pounded on a stone when half burnt, and then replaced on embers. The stomach and entrails were slit open and their contents merely scooped away with the fingers, and roasted. No water whatever was used! It was a truly sickening sight to see the relish with which the intestines with adherent faecal matter
267 were greedily eaten. When we remarked on the repulsiveness of it, the gluttonous epicure calmly remarked, "Yes, the filth gets eaten right enough. What of it? It is good medicine. If you get a wanderoo what haven't you got? No marriage is like it." How true is the saying that the pig and the Vedda are one!

226 Fish* abound in the forest streams, all bony and very indifferent
824 to the taste. The Veddas catch these, not with rods or nets, but with poisons. The fruit, bark or root of certain trees† is smashed up and thrown into pools or banked waterways. The water is then stirred; as it gets stained the fish become restless, and leap on to the bank, or turn belly upwards stupefied. They are collected and boiled with a
[251 little salt and a few chillies and eaten at once, or dried over a trestle
252] like meat.

222 Let us see what sort of fare the jungle trees provide. Of fruit there is plenty in season:—*Mora*, *kong*, *galseembela*, *veera*, *palu*, *damba*, jak, guavas, *ulkamitha*, *kibutoo*, *bulanga*, *kothalanga*, *leyansya*, *karambe*, *madu* never eaten raw because it causes giddiness and vomiting!). The cabbages of palms such as *inthibada* and *kitulalla*. Yams:—*Gonala*, *katuala*, *hiratihala*, *alalla*, in order of preference. Then there are the
● [261] various barks they chew incessantly to stay the hunger of their long fasts:—*Demata*, *bolvilla* and *thambola*, all substitutes for betel; and *davata* for arecanut; and besides these the barks of *opulu*, *galseembela*, *mora*, *habathaa*, *nuga*, *kalawa*, *galkara*, and in fact anything, however, insipid, proviided it is not poisonous.

757 Their medicines are few. There is *gonkuttudalu* which they crush up
752 with water and apply to the head for headaches; *meelalla-pothu* which they smash up with *chunam* and use as a dressing for wounds; but for abrassions of the foot they will as soon rub in a little sand with

* *Walapotho, anguluo, lulo, katukanao, kanupatho, antho* (eels), *maguro, kungo, kekeliyo, pethyr, walihondo, sethalu, badapathalo, walikairiyo, piniweliyo, kovalayo, galpanduruo.*

† *Kukurumanng-gedde, kala-mul, thimbiri-gedde, dhamba-pothu, pussal-mul.*

342 eggs of gekkoes very like candle droppings. A few of the caves have drip ledges (evidence of Sinhalese occupation) which serve to keep them dry: those without this feature are all adrip during the rains and their floors are mossy. Rocky out-crops, large loose stones and, perhaps a white-ant hill or two, divide up the floor space into sections in which the various Vedda families lie grouped, each in its allotted span. Here and there the stony floor is cupped where maize has been pounded, or worn [372] smooth where *kurrukkan* has been rubbed to flour with the flat polished stones that lie about. A fire-place or two, a cooking frame, and dry leaves (*pana*, *pinney dea*, or *kalamas*), the bedding of these people, complete the picture.

Let us take the more important of the caves as we pass them on our way from Bingoda to Newaragala. Like our houses they are all named.

Matigaha galge is a deep roomy grotto formed by a superincumbent rock mass supported slantwise on large flanking boulders. Partially obstructing its entrance, and just within cover of its roof, is a steep rounded stone which one family would occupy silhouetted against a [312] tree-intersected sky. Its only source of water is the Magalavatan Aar a quarter mile away. This disadvantage, and its nearness to the Bingoda homes, accounts for its present disuse. Suthu Banda was born here. Kaurala who had not seen it since his childhood could not help a word of regret on seeing it now after the long years: "Ah!" he sighed. "Is this the old home. No one to inhabit it now."

Galthale galge (Rock-slab cave) owes its name to a slab of rock within it, beneath which one must crawl to gain a gloomy inner compartment. A reedy pool below, and the cyfax, cactus and vines about its mouth give it a touch of wild picturesqueness.

Alu galge (Ash cave), which lies at the base of Newaragala, is less a cave than a passage under an immense boulder spanning two lateral outcrops. It is so well concealed by large stones guarding its mouth that one would not suspect its presence even when standing within a few feet of it. The floor slopes up steeply towards a narrowing exit, and is so bestrewn with rocks as to afford no convenient resting place. Yet, in a cranny here or a basin there, the Veddas contrive to make themselves comfortable, as the withered leaves that have served them as mats testify. A small tripodal frame shows where flesh has been [312] roasted. There is no lack of water here; for not only does a perennial spring lie at its entrance, the resort of innumerable bears during the drought, but in the rainy season a rivulet flows right through the cave.

222 This cave is a favourite of the Veddas who come here when the jak trees, which grow on the slopes of Newaragala, are in fruit. Then, spending a few days, they feast to surfeiting on the tender fruit, and with their [261] characteristic improvidence carry none away. It was here that Kaurala stayed when he "skinned" Nuwaragala—which was his own beautiful way of saying he had stripped it clean of hives. How secret are the ways of Veddas may be judged from the fact that here was a cave frequented by them without its being known to the Sinhalese who lived six miles away. And we who had once spent a night on Newaragala were ignorant that here below us was a cave used by the very Veddas we yearned to know.

261 But of all the caves I have seen *Dhik galge* was the best. I have already described this cave; it remains for me to add a few vital touches. In

Spittel D-6 (ca. 1920) 1965 AX5 Vedda AX5

front of it is a much chipped *opulu* tree from which the Veddas every now and then renew their chew. Throughout the day the surrounding woods echo to the voices of food-gatherers or the blows of axes, as combs are cut out of hollow trees. At fiful intervals the *kolong koha* (stork-billed king-fisher), lord of the rocky stream, raises a clamorous cry, or the wood-pecker startlingly proclaims to the world that it sees the great she-demon (*maha yakkini*). As evening comes, the *kotaha* (gekko) that shares the cave, drawls in quaint imitation of his name, "ko-tak-ko." The night is ushered in by the solemn notes of the night jar* and bell-like sounds of frogs. The crescent moon shines through the trees, peopling the forest with mysterious shadows. Strange noises are heard around, a breaking branch perhaps, a dropping stone, or an animal's foot-falls. Then the little one creeps to its mother whispering, "Mother, the *kotha*"; and she, fondling, replies, "Yes, it is the *kotha*, child; be still." Now fires are stirred, and the Veddas, couched on leaves, and doubled up under their meagre rags, lie as close to them as they dare. For the caves are cold at night even on the hottest day. And every now and then throughout the dark, one or other of them groans with the chill, gets up, pokes the fire, and snuggles nearer to it. Is it a wonder that ash is the morning mark of the Vedda and *Alu galge* a favourite name of his cave? By six, the morning mists have melted and the cave begins to warm.

*At dusk, and all through the night, Horsfield's night jar gathers into its rich liquid notes the silence and mystery of the forest. There is no jungle, however desolate, in which this ever welcome music is not heard. It is at once the curfew of the jungle, the embodiment of all the stealthy, nocturnal life in it, and the destiny and doom of it.

Puthu-kath-poruwa (seven-sons-axe) is the Sinhalese name of the bird in perfect imitation of its cry; and the following story explains it.—A woman once sent her seven sons into the jungle to fell trees. One of the trees falling in their direction, the brothers attempted to shoulder it off and were all killed. The mother, having cooked the evening meal, waited at home for her sons. But as they did not return she went out to look for them, and found them all dead beside the fallen tree. Taking up an axe she killed herself and became this bird; and now from dusk till dawn she cries *puthu-kath-poruwa* through the lonesome woods